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Friday, Feb 04, 2005

Posted on Mon, Jan. 31, 2005



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Make sure promise to farmers is kept

By Lonnie Napier

Last year, Congress passed the Fair and Equitable Tobacco Reform Act to ensure that tobacco companies made Phase II payments for 2004 to tobacco growers and quota owners.

But a court recently ruled that tobacco companies are not required to make the Phase II funding available as intended by Congress.

Because of this unfortunate ruling, 160,000 tobacco growers and quota owners, deserving and expecting the promised \$124 million, stand to lose it.

This travesty is a serious blow to Kentucky's already-fragile farm economy, and concerned state legislators are determined to make sure farmers get what they deserve.

Farmers already have lost quotas and price supports. Slip-shucking farmers by failing to come through on the promised Phase II money is unfair and unacceptable.

The tobacco conglomerates, which lobbied state legislators last year to add \$4.50 to every carton of their competitors' cigarettes, have done all they can to shut down small tobacco companies. Only a

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few elitists who would not even know how to cut a tobacco stalk have been helped, not the little man. The farmer and quota holder have been turned out to root hog or die.

I ask Kentuckians to join me in helping farmers. Please support state House Resolution 36, which urges Congress to re-examine its 2004 law and to clarify that its intent was for the tobacco companies to make the 2004 Phase II payment to growers and quota owners.

It is only right to give farmers the fair shake they deserve instead of starving them so a handful can have far more than they will ever need.


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